

THAT PESKY BAR

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WHEN Sarah Ann Johnsey and Mary Ann, her little five-year-old, returned from the hayfield to "bile" a cup of tea and to heat up a mess of beans for pa and Andy Glinns, the "help," they were "mighty took aback" to find a black bear, big as life and twice as natural, sitting on their kitchen floor and peacefully licking the last remnants of the anticipated dinner from off his clumsy paws.

Now, Sarah Ann was not "skeered," though it did "fetch her sort of sudden-like"—not she. "She just up and thought of all the mean, low down things that blamed critter had been a-doin' about property—killin' sheep, upsettin' her bee houses, tearin' down the grapevines and land knows what



SHE FLUNG A GALLON OF SOAPY WATER IN THE ANIMAL'S FACE.

all besides," while a great rage welled up in her usually gentle heart, and it seemed as if a vengeance swift and terrible was about to descend upon this innocent, sleepy looking creature. Like a flash she sprang to a low bench just inside the door, seized a wash basin in both hands and flung a gallon of soapy water full in the animal's face. Spluttering and growling, the bear retreated into a back room, and Mrs. Johnsey hastily slammed the door upon her unwelcome visitor, effectually cutting off his means of escape.

This accomplished, she turned to Mary Ann, who had been standing at one side watching the performance with staring eyes and serious face, and spoke to her sharply: "Now, jest yer look here, Mary Ann, and mind what I'm a-sayin' to yer. Sit right down there on that stoop, and don't yer move till I git back and don't yer let no one come in, for there's a awful growed up b'ar in that back room that would jest love to eat sech as you. I'm a-goin' to git yer pa to come and kill it dead. Now, mind what I tell yer! And, with a parting glance at the parlor door, she climbed a snake fence and hurried across a field of stubble, disappearing behind a low hill.

Mary Ann sat dutifully where she was put, with her small mind full of thoughts of the "big doggie," till she saw the tall figure of her pa come bounding over the rise, followed a moment later by ma, and then Andy valiantly waving a hayfork above his head.

When they had all collected in the kitchen Jabez suddenly grabbed his head, while a queer expression spread over his honest countenance. "Sarah Ann Johnsey, if yer ain't the big headedest, all around stupidest female bein' that ever milked a cow! Do you know what yer gone and done? Ye've cooped up the b'ar right along in the same room as my gun, and then yer callate that I'm a-goin' ter shoot him. If that ain't the women folk fer yer!"

Sarah Ann looked blank. "If we only hed known in time we could 'a' got a lend of Joe Sansen's gun, but I reckon as how he took it along when he went pa'tridge killin' out back settlement way," she answered in self defense.

Meanwhile Andy had sneaked around the house and had cautiously peeped in the parlor window "to git a squint at the pesky brute," only to discover that the room was empty. He rushed back with wild excitement. "Jabe, Jabe!" he shouted. "He ain't thar! He ain't thar! He's up and cleared out, I tell yer!"

Sarah Ann turned with fury on Mary Ann. "What have yer gone and done with that there b'ar, Mary Ann Johnsey, that I left yer so careful-like ter keep yer eye on when I was a-fetchin' yer pa? Now, none of yer lyin' ter me, but speak up quick!" And she grabbed her by the arm and shook her vigorously.

"I didn't do nuffin—I didn't—I didn't—I didn't!" Mary Ann wailed in a piercing voice, and the last wall was still on the move as the others entered the house for a closer investigation.

"It do seem as if he had jest meened away!" wammered Sarah Ann in an awestruck voice as they peered through the crack of the slightly opened door. "Where could he have got ter?"

"They soon discovered his retreat. At one side of the room a trap door led down through the floor into the cold, dark cellar below, and Mrs. Johnsey had forgot to close it after her last descent. Anyway, there hung the gun above the mantelpiece, and she vigorously thrust her husband into the room. "Land alive! Hurry up, pa, and drive the varmint out of thet or he'll have e't up all the winter butter! Oh, he's gone and done it now!" she shrieked as a loud crash sounded from below. "I knew he would!"

Jabez strode bravely forward and was just reaching down the old fashioned muzzle loader when the beast emerged from the trap and ambled swiftly for the open door.

If brain thought that he was going to escape so easily, with the weight of all his sins upon his head, he was vastly mistaken. Sarah Ann leaped out and slammed the door in his face. A man, a bear and a gun shut together in a space eight feet square! It looked very much as if something ought to happen. Jabez thought so too.

"Holy pokers, Sarah! Open that door quick!" he shouted.

"Shoot him, shoot him!" answered Mrs. Johnsey. "He'll git out if I open the door."

"Gid darn it, let him git out!" the farmer shouted back. "I'm no blamed b'ar hunter, and I ain't a-goin' to be neither!" And then, as this seemed ineffectual, a bright inspiration flashed through his brain. "Do yer want blood and b'ar's grease messed all over yer parlor floor, Sarah, for there will be yer don't look real smart?"

The door flew open on the instant, while Mrs. Johnsey, having removed herself to one side, piped up in another tune:

"Don't yer hit him—don't yer hit him, Jabez! Let him git under the house first."

But the bear in the meantime had changed his mind and instead of "gittin' out" sat in the doorway growling and making faces at poor old Johnsey, whose gun was drawing invisible hieroglyphics in the air.

Now, when the bear had made his appearance from below the valiant Andy had squeezed in between the hot stove and the wall and seated himself in a large earthen dish of dough which Sarah Ann had put there to "raise." The good woman suddenly spied a pitchfork and a perspiring red face above the water kettle, and she hurled an appeal to the "help."

"My land, Andy, git and drive the b'ar out of there before pa messes his dirty carcass all over my clean floor!"

But pa had taken his loving wife's advice and was now in the cellar, with the trapdoor clapped to behind him.

With some difficulty Mr. Johnsey was extricated from his retreat by means of a very narrow window that led into the potato bin, and they all withdrew themselves to a distance to encourage the departure of the guest.

"If yer had shot thet beast in the best room in ther house, Jabez Johnsey, you and I would ha' parted company next minut', I can jest tell yer!" said Mrs. Johnsey firmly. "It ain't as if I hadn't nigh broke my back havin'



'HOLY POKERS, SARAH! OPEN THAT DOOR QUICK!'

it all put to rights again only last fortnight," she went on, keeping her eye on the back door as she spoke. "What can be a-keepin' thet thar b'ar?"

"Gid darn yer hide, Andy Glinns!" growled the irritated farmer. "An' what was yer doin' all the time, I'd like to know, while I was a-fightin' the dirty brute? Under the bed up in the loft, I reckon, yer white livered pup!"

"Thar yer wrong, Jabez Johnsey, and yer know it. I jest kinder mislaid m'self; thet's all," Andy retorted.

At this point poor little Mary Ann set up a dismal howling.

"I want a cookie—I want a d'ink of milk—I want somef'n to eat! Boo-oo!" It was sitting along near sundown,

and still the bear showed no signs of evacuating his position. He knew a good thing when he smelt it, and the house contained many good things in the line of jams and jellies which the thrifty housewife had bottled for the winter, to say nothing of cakes and pies and apples, and it seemed afterward as if his delicate snout had

brought to light everything that a bear might love in kitchen, pantry or cellar. They all stood gawping in silence—that is, with the exception of Mary Ann. Suddenly the old farmer struck up, while a broad grin rolled around his face, and he clapped his hand on his leg.

"I've been a-thinkin' and a-thinkin', and I 'low as somef'n has to be done, and thet real smart, and I reckon as I can do it. Come along o' me, Andy." And he turned and strode off in the direction of the barn.

Andy and Sarah Ann both followed, the latter tugging Mary Ann by the hand.

"Now, jest yer help me catch the critter," said Jabez as he climbed into the pigsty. And Andy obediently obeyed.

"Land, what yer goin' to do with Buttercup, pa?" queried his wife in a voice of astonishment.

"Jest you wait, and you'll see—eh! Shut yer squealin', yer blasted idgit!"



DASHED BETWEEN HIS OUTSTRETCHED LEGS.

Nothin' ain't goin' to hurt yer!" This last to the panic stricken porker which he had grabbed and stowed beneath his arm. It was only eight months old.

When they had returned to the back yard the farmer gave minute directions to the hired man.

"Now, see here, Andy, you take the pig around to the parlor window and drop him inside, and I'll wait out here with the gun, and when the b'ar chases out arter the pig I'll ping the brute. Git a hike on!"

It worked perfectly—at least the first part did—for after a few minutes of awful silence a terrible commotion filled the house. First there was a resounding crash, as if the whole sideboard had gone over, followed by ear piercing squeals and noise of falling dishes.

Jabez had just time to yell: "Git outter the way, ma! Holy Jerusalem, here they come!" when the whole circus came streaming out of the house.

Alas for the second part of the arrangements! The terrified fugitive saw the farmer and, after the habit of pigs, sought safety by dashing between his outstretched legs. Jabez strove to leap aside, but it was too late. His feet were knocked from under him, the gun went off into the clouds, and pursued and pursuer disappeared in the distance.

When the last lingering squeals had died away Mrs. Johnsey turned to her bewildered husband with all the contempt, not unmixed with triumph, she could throw into her voice:

"Who's the pig headedest, long leggedest, stupidest born fool now?" she vociferated.

Mr. Johnsey began thoughtfully to brush the dust off his trousers leg.

"Now, see here, Sarah Ann, didn't I 'low as I would git thet thar pesky b'ar outter thar? And didn't I?"

Bathing Season in Nicaragua.

The Nicaraguans do things in quite primitive style. They do not put up at cramped and questionably clean lodging houses, but camp in gypsy fashion, high and low alike, for miles along the shore and pass the time in morning baths, round games, gallops by day and moonlight dances by night on the yellow sands, with partners of every variety of color down to the laughing yellow girls of the native class and the simple Indian peasant damsels of the fields. It is a sight not soon to be forgotten to witness the general rush toward the sea of carts, owners and servants. The government usually dispatches an officer and a guard to superintend the pitching of the annual camp upon the beach, or, rather, upon the forest covered sand ridge which fringes the shore. Each family rigs up its own camp but, lightly thatched with palm trees and floored with petates, or mats, the whole wickered together with vines or woven together basketwise and partitioned in the same way by means of colored curtains of cotton cloth. The more luxurious ladies send down their neatly curtained beds and make sometimes a certain show of elegance.

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